

# STOREFRONT for Art & Architecture

97 Kenmare Street New York, NY 10012 212-431-5795

## PRESS RELEASE

January 15 - February 13

"Temporary Public Art"

Kate Ericson

Jenny Holzer

Alfredo Jaar

Krzysztof Wodiczko

Mel Ziegler

*Director/Founder*  
Kyong Park

*Associate Director*  
Shirin Neshat

Curated By: Patricia Phillips

Opening Reception: January 14, 7-9 pm.

Gallery Hours: Wed. - Sun. 12-6 pm.

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STOREFRONT for Art and Architecture will sponsor an exhibition called "Temporary Public Art" from January 15 to February 13. The exhibition will explore the work of five artists who embrace issues of ephemerality and temporary conditions as inspiration, content, and structure in the production of public art. It is this intersection of public art and temporariness that creates a fruitful site for inquiry. The exhibition will include documentation of and elements from temporary projects by Jenny Holzer, Alfredo Jaar, Krzysztof Wodiczko, and Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler.

In the past 15 years, private and public agencies have been established to support the installation of permanent public art. This professionalization of public art has brought a stability to the production process for both artists and communities. But a landscape of only enduring projects is a mixed blessing; the danger is not controversy but banality.

For the artists in this exhibition and the projects represented, permanency is not a desired objective and the short-lived situation is welcomed for the unique opportunities it generates. Because of their ephemeral qualities these projects free the artist to explore marginal circumstances and sites, to examine topical ideas and urgent issues, and to investigate the notion of time itself in public art and public life. Suspended between object and event, temporary public art provides an ongoing laboratory for cultural research.

Temporary projects are a rich but unanalyzed area of creative invention. The temporary in public art provides an expanded and alternative forum for artists and the public to explore the idea and the consequences of public art in the late 20th century.

For further information, please contact: STOREFRONT for Art and Architecture, 97 Kenmare St. New York. Tel: (212)431-5795.

# Temporality and Public Art

By Patricia C. Phillips

*"Life is never fixed and stable. It is always mercurial, rolling and splitting, disappearing and reemerging in a most unpredictable fashion."*

—Loren Eiseley<sup>1</sup>

Immutability is valued by society. There is a desire for a steadfast art that expresses permanence through its own perpetualness. Simultaneously, society has a conflicting predilection for an art that is contemporary and timely, that responds to and reflects its temporal and circumstantial context. And then there is a self-contradicting longing that this fresh spontaneity be protected, made invulnerable to time, in order to assume its place as historical artifact and as concrete evidence of a period's passions and priorities. For the Venice Biennale in 1986, Krzysztof Wodiczko projected a collaged photographic image of a 35mm camera, a gun belt with a grenade, and a large tank for several hours onto the base of the 600-year-old campanile in the Piazza San Marco. Besides providing a critique of tourism and politics, Wodiczko's project offered a potent dialectic on the ambivalent requirements for stability and preservation, and change and temporality. To make these points, it required both the unyielding permanence of the campanile and the ephemerality of projected light. Public art is about such dynamic issues: public life embodies such contradictions.

The late twentieth century has thrown these questions of time and expectation, change and value into high relief. It is an accelerated, acquisitive, and acquiescent age in which the presence of enduring objects has become as quixotic as time itself. What is substantial—what is coveted and depended on with some certainty, what endures across generations—is often no longer expressed or communicated by the same symbols. The visual environment transposes as rapidly as the actions of the mind and the eye. In both private and public life the phenomenological dimen-

sions of indeterminacy, change, and the temporary require aggressive assimilation, not because they are grim, unavoidable forces but because they suggest potential ideas and freedoms.

Coming to grips with the temporary does not require a fast, desperate embrace of absolute relativity; both strong lessons and substantial ideas can be discovered in the synapses, the alternatives that occur between, and conceptually connect, discrete phenomena. The reality of ephemerality is perhaps most persuasively and unmistakably felt in the vast public landscape. The private can offer some quiet refuge, some constancy of routine, but public life has become emblematic not of what is shared by a constituency but of the restless, shifting differences that compose and enrich it. Public life is both startlingly predictable and constantly surprising.

As Richard Sennett and others have suggested,<sup>2</sup> the private is a human condition, but the public is invented—and re-created by each generation. In retrospect, there has been a discernible public life in most societies throughout time, but the idea of public is mutable and flexible. The notion of public may, indeed, be the most quixotic idea encountered in contemporary culture. It is redefined not just by the conspicuous adjustments of political transition and civic thought but by the conceptions of private that serve as its foil, its complement, and, ultimately, its texture. The challenge for each person is to uphold this dynamic interplay of personal and public identity, to embrace the often stimulating and always difficult nature of this important dialogue, and to be as fully engaged in the world as with one's own psychic territory.

These developmental ideas about the public frequently run parallel to the current enthusiasms for public art that have overrun most cities and towns in the United States. It is as if the litera-

ture and legacy of the public process and the interest in public art production were separate entities, spontaneous eruptions uninformed by, and perhaps unaware of, the other. Discussions of public art frequently consider specific communities but rarely the public at large. There seems to be an implicit assumption that everybody knows what "public" means, and concerns turn to more observable, more easily calculable issues. Much has been said about the failures or successes of public art,<sup>3</sup> but very little about the philosophical questions a public art may raise or illuminate, or even about whether the idea of a public art requires significant intellectual inquiry and justification in the first place. I think that the problem is that public art has sought to define itself without assembling all of the data and before entertaining all of the complex and potent variables it must accept and can express. Public art has been too often applied as a modest antidote or a grand solution, rather than perceived as a forum for investigation, articulation, and constructive reappraisal. Although it is at an exploratory stage, public art is treated as if it were a production of fixed strategies and principles.

One way that artists and agencies can continue to generate public art and remain analytical about its purpose, its composition, and how it is to be distinguished (or not) from other creative enterprises is to support more short-lived experiments in which variables can be changed and results intelligently and sensitively examined. Public art requires a more passionate commitment to the temporary—to the information culled from the short-lived project. This proposal is offered not as an indictment of or indifference to permanent public art, but rather as an endorsement of alternatives. The temporary not only has a certain philosophical currency, but it permits art production to simulate the

idea of the research laboratory. This proposal is conservative: a suggestion to take time, to study, to try more modest projects, to express what is known about the contemporary condition. It requires a comprehension of value based on ideas and content rather than on lasting forms, a flexibility of procedures for making and placing art, and a more inventive and attentive critical process.

In his book on geological time, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle*,<sup>3</sup> Stephen Jay Gould explores the dual nature of time in Western thought: temporality is expe-

rienced both cyclically and consecutively. The Western mind relies on conceptions of time that explain both the security of constancy and continuity and the stimulation of progress and change. The public is shaped by similar coincidental and contradictory ideas. People return cyclically to annual public events even when these seem empty and reflexive: they provide a fixed point of reference. But public life must also accommodate the actions of progress; on this depends the enhancement of democratic values and the enrichment of life. Lin-

earity enables the public to rally its strength and vision to work for improvement and revision. These opposing conceptions of temporality are intrinsically connected to public life—to expectations that guide actions, to the events and occurrences that constantly define and transform experience. And these potent, problematic ideas are what art has traditionally addressed through its formal and temporal manifestations. Public art is like other art, but it is potentially enriched and amended by a multiplicity of philosophical, political, and civic issues. It need not seek some common denominator or express some common good to be public, but it can provide a visual language to express and explore the dynamic, temporal conditions of the collective.

Clearly, public art is not public just because it is out of doors, or in some identifiable civic space, or because it is something that almost everyone can apprehend: it is public because it is a manifestation of art activities and strategies that take the idea of public as the genesis and subject for analysis. It is public because of the kinds of questions it chooses to ask or address, and not because of its accessibility or volume of viewers. This is, of course, a far more difficult and obscure definition of public art, and the methods and intentions of production and criticism are less predictable, more unruly. It requires a commitment to experimentation—to the belief that public art and public life are not fixed. There are many variables: time is perhaps the most crucial and the least frequently addressed.

If the "public" in public art is construed not as the audience for the art but as the body of ideas and subjects that artists choose to concentrate on, then public art cannot be examined for its broadness of communication, for its popular reception, for its sensitive siting. A temporal public art may not offer broad proclamations; it may stir controversy and rage; it may cause confusion; it may occur in nontraditional, marginal, and private places. In such an art the conceptual takes precedence over the more obvious circumstantial.

Public art is about the idea of the commons—the physical configuration and mental landscape of American public life. The commons was frequently a planned but sometimes a spontaneously arranged open space in American towns, but its lasting significance in cultural history is not so much the place it once held in the morphology of the city as the idea it became for the enactment and refreshment of public life—its dynamic, often conflicting expressions.



*Fig. 1* Dennis Adams (artist), Nicholas Goldsmith (architect), with Ann Magnuson (performance artist), *Podium for Dissent*, 1985, New York City. Creative Time, Inc.

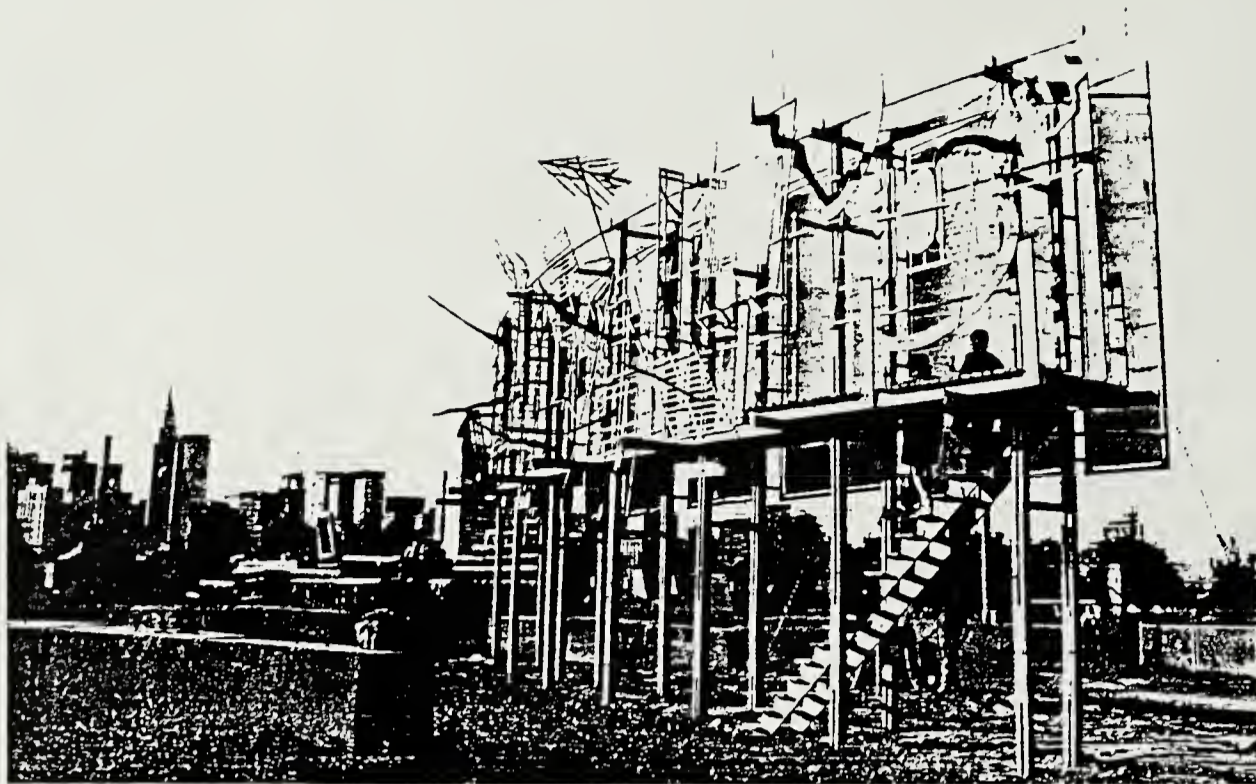


Fig. 2 Cameron McNall (in collaboration with Julia Heyward, performance artist), untitled work, *Art on the Beach*, 1987, Hunters Point, NY. Creative Time, Inc.

If the actual site of the commons confirmed some constancy for people, the moment of the day and the time of the year defined the activities and priorities realized in the space. At times of conflict and war, the commons was used to train and drill militia; in the spring and summer, the open green space was used as another meadow for livestock to graze; at times of political election or civic debate it became the site for speech making, for the debate of issues, as the space of dissent. The commons was the stage where the predictable and unexpected theater of the public could be presented and interpreted. It was the physical and psychic location where change was made manifest. The kind of agitation, drama, and unraveling of time that defines "public" occurred most vividly and volatily in the commons. It was not the site of repose or rigidity.

Those responsible for the sponsorship and production of contemporary public art would do well to follow the actual life of the commons and its harmonious, mythical misrepresentation. The space of the commons existed to support the collage of private interests that constitutes all communities, to articulate and not diminish the dialectic between common purpose and individual free will. It is in that space that the idea of time and its relationship to the public may be best understood. The philosophical idea of the commons is based on dissent, transition, and difficult but committed resolution; this legacy remains current even as the space and memory of the commons are diminished.

In New York City, there are two organizations whose primary mission is to support and encourage the production of temporary, ephemeral public art. The irony of sustained institutional support for the most fleeting endeavors is obvious, but the aesthetic results are frequently informed by the exceptional situation. Their variety of productions has actually challenged the institutionalization of public art; whether all the work they have sponsored is good, or maverick, or communicative is not the issue. It is the field of experimentation that they have tried to cultivate that is remarkable. They take the idea of the commons to many different communities; the exercise of displacement has reinforced and provided fresh articulations of the commons as the symbol, if not the site, of public life. In contrast to these organizations, there are also artists who work independently to produce public art that is often unexpected, infrequently encountered, and deliberately short-lived. It is through many of these productions that the idea of a public art is acquiring a tougher accountability and identity.

In the early 1970s, Creative Time, Inc., began to organize its first public-art productions. The organization began by using conventional sites offered by corporations with excess, underutilized real estate. The first site of a Creative Time production was Wall Street Plaza at 88 Pine Street. The 6,000-square-foot lobby was provided by Orient Overseas Associates. Between 1974 and 1978, four experimental works were installed in this vast space.<sup>4</sup> The one that was

most participatory and perhaps most enthusiastically received was Red Grooms's *Ruckus Manhattan*. Grooms and a large number of assistants worked for more than seven months inventing and constructing a rich allegorical, visual narrative of Manhattan. The stories of pedestrians who visited the site were frequently adopted and transformed in Grooms's rowdy, accretive project.

Creative Time's most enduring and repeated project—*Art on the Beach*—was an annual event begun in the summer of 1978. On a two-acre landfill site at the north end of the Battery Park City development, the organization sponsored collaborative public-art projects involving artists, architects, dancers, choreographers, musicians, and other creative professionals (Fig. 1). The projects were constructed at the beginning of the summer, performances were scheduled during the season, and the entire extravaganza disappeared by autumn. In 1987, when *Art on the Beach* lost its sandy expanse in Manhattan, Creative Time transported the summer event to another, more gritty, landfill site at Hunters Point in Queens, which was provided by the Port Authority (Fig. 2).

What is perhaps most significant and resonant about *Art on the Beach* and so many other Creative Time-sponsored public art activities is their temporality and the opportunity (and necessity) they provided for artists to be experimental. Every year, the structure of *Art on the*



Fig. 3 Marina Gutierrez, untitled computer animation, 1989, Spectacolor lightboard, One Times Square.



Fig. 4 Tom Finkelpearl, *Crossroads*, 1987, New York City. Public Art Fund, Inc.

*Beach* changed: new variables were introduced, others were eliminated. It thus became a continuing laboratory for examining the relationship of collaborative process to aesthetic production in temporary work. In some years, Creative Time assembled the collaborative teams; in others, the artists themselves selected their colleagues. But it was the annual anticipation as well as the short-lived dynamics of each *Art on the Beach* that enabled and endorsed this kind of productive fiddling and fine-tuning. Perhaps a careful analysis of each *Art on the Beach* would reveal much about the nature of collaboration and about the intense compression of ideas that occurs in a temporary urban site in a squeezed period of time.

Although their sponsored productions are quite different from those of Creative Time, the Public Art Fund, Inc., founded in 1972, is dedicated to the temporary placement of public art in a variety of urban neighborhoods and contexts. The sites are commonly accepted public sites—parks and plazas—but the Public Art Fund projects come and go; the art becomes the dynamic variable in a series of sometimes predictable, sometimes unusual urban settings. One of the organization's most inventive sponsorships is the *Messages to the Public* series (Fig. 3). Begun in 1982, this project makes the Spectacolor computer-animated lightboard on the north elevation of the building at One Times Square available to artists to program short (usually twenty seconds) spots that run about once every twenty minutes. Inserted between tacky and aggressive advertisements, these Public Art Fund "moments" not only provide a surprising, direct forum for public art but also raise questions about the relationship of public art to information and stimulate wry speculations about art

and advertising. Some of the Spectacolor works project a deliberate ambiguity between the art moment and the ad, between the aesthetic-political agenda and the pitch to the consumer.

The Spectacolor projects programmed by artists are temporary and episodic; the medium demands ephemerality. The presentation of new information must be relentless; the balance of

change and repetition must be carefully considered. Also, the encounter and experience of the audience is unregulated; there are some public art enthusiasts who seek out this changing series of messages, but the majority of viewers are unprepared and arrive often by chance on site; *Messages to the Public* is often delivered to a public that is unfamiliar with the Public Art Fund, with the participating artists, or with this strange convergence of art images and advertisements. It is this unregulated encounter of the art and the ambiguity of its structure and content that make this series a rich, complex, and not adequately analyzed forum.

The landscape of public art in New York City would be greatly diminished without the kind of ephemeral theater and important data produced by the two organizations. But what is important about both Creative Time, Inc., and the Public Art Fund, Inc., is not simply the variety of art productions that they have brought to the streets and spaces of the city, but the forum they have provided to explore the meaning of public art in the late twentieth century. Because the work is part of the urban fabric for short periods of time, there is freedom to try



Fig. 5 Alfredo Jaar, *Rushes*, 1986, Spring Street Subway Station, New York City.

new ideas, new forms, new methods of production. Perhaps there is also the willingness to engage difficult ideas and current issues in ways that more enduring projects cannot. The highly compressed and temporal circumstances are an incitement—and also a responsibility—to be courageous with ideas, to be vanguard about definitions of public art, and to make commitments that concern content rather than longevity.

Some of the most fruitful, provocative, temporary installations of public art have come from artists on their own initiative both with and without the support or restraints of official sponsors. Tom Finkelpearl has done short-lived public-art projects with both Creative Time and the Public Art Fund, but some of his strongest public work has been independently produced. Several years ago, he moved to New York to study a common and growing phenomenon of abandonment in the city. Finkelpearl began his own guerrilla project to explore and perhaps heighten some collective awareness of the attitude of obsolescence. At different sites, he finds old abandoned cars and painstakingly paints these rusted carcasses gold, endowing them with an artificial, ironic, sprayed-on patina of preciousness (Fig. 4). These projects happen spontaneously; they last until the cars are finally towed away. It is as if the act of public art, the commitment to communication, the gesture of compassion and critique transcend the lasting qualities of the object. That these golden wrecks disappear often quickly and always unpredictably amplifies their disturbing, ambivalent iconography.

Several years ago Alfredo Jaar arranged with the Metropolitan Transit Authority and the lease-holders of the advertising space on the Spring Street subway platform in New York to insert his own installation. For just over a month, Jaar's pasted-on posters—images of a gold rush occurring in Brazil amid abject poverty—replaced the usual advertisements meant to induce people to part with their money. Along the length of the uptown and downtown platforms, Jaar placed large prints of photographs he had taken of this modern-day phenomenon: throughout the installation period, he regularly inserted posters with the current world gold prices in New York, Frankfurt, Tokyo, and London (Fig. 5). On this subway line to Wall Street, passengers encountered these grim, grainy images of men who dig for gold with little hope of finding any for themselves. The artist offered no explanatory or didactic text; the public was asked to form its own

perceptions and draw its own conclusions. But the success of this political production was the sense of urgency and dislocation embodied in the temporary. In this context, created to sell magazines, liquor, and underwear to waiting passengers, Jaar used the frames and format for advertising to engage the public in a complex and disturbing narrative about its own complicity in world events. His project asked people to overcome their insularity and isolation. The content was underscored by the immediacy and brevity of the installation. The fact that it appeared almost spontaneously and disappeared quickly helped to accentuate the urgency of the ideas.

There is a danger in a public art that is not challenged, that is based on naively constructed prescriptions. Some of the restraining assumptions made about public art concern where it should occur, who the audience is, what issues it can address, what ideas it can express, and how long it should last; much of this speculation is based on information and impressions formed more than a century ago. The historical precedents for public art offer no template for the present or for the future. Public art does not have to last forever; it does not have to cast its message to some unmistakable but platitudinous theme that absolutely everyone will get; it does not have to mark or make a common ground. As the texture and context of public life changes over the years, public art must reach for new articulations and new expectations. It must rely on its flexibility, its adaptability to be both responsive and timely, to be both specific and temporary. Ephemeral public art provides a continuity for analysis of the conditions and changing configurations of public life, without mandating the stasis required to express eternal values to a broad audience with different backgrounds and often different verbal and visual imaginations.

The errors of much public art have been its lack of specificity, its tendency to look at society—at the public—too broadly and simply. The temporary in public art is not about an absence of commitment or involvement, but about an intensification and enrichment of the conception of public. The public is diverse, variable, volatile, controversial; and it has its origins in the private lives of all citizens. The encounter of public art is ultimately a private experience; perception outlasts actual experience. It is these rich ambiguities that should provide the subject matter for public art; the temporary provides the flexible, adjustable, and critical vehicle to explore the relationship of lasting values and current events, to enact the idea of

the commons in our own lives. A conceptualization of the idea of time in public art is a prerequisite for a public life that enables inspired change.

#### Notes

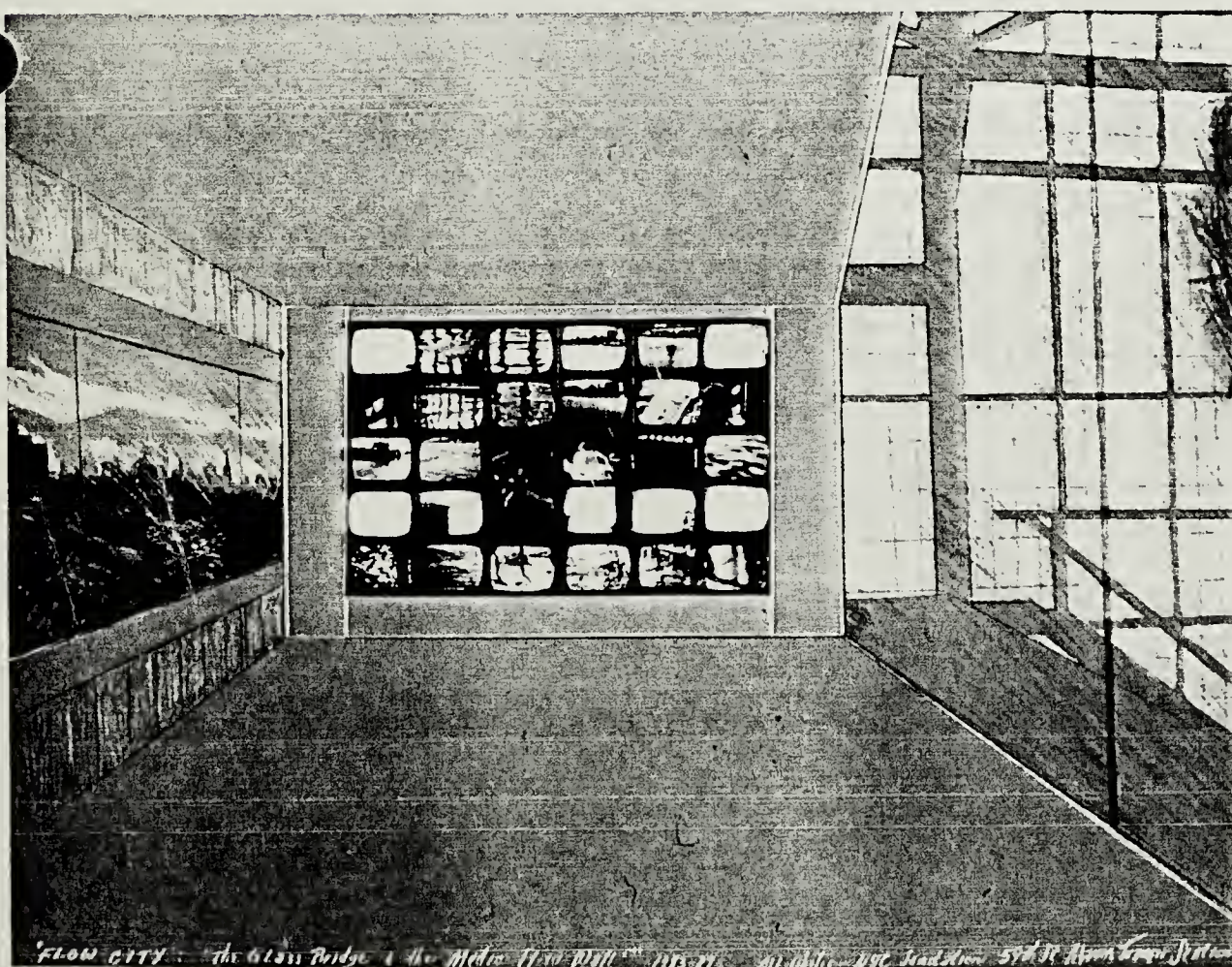
- 1 Loren Eiseley, *Man, Time, and Prophecy*, New York, 1966, p. 27.
- 2 Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder*, New York, 1970.
- 3 Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle*, Cambridge, MA, 1987.
- 4 Anita Contini, "Alternative Sites and Uncommon Collaborators: The Story of Creative Time," *Insights/On Sites*, ed., Stacy Paleologos Harris, Washington, DC, 1984.

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# Out of Order: The Public Art Machine

PATRICIA C. PHILLIPS



There's good reason to be wary these days when the signs of another specialization start emerging—when one small point is established at the sacrifice of the wide horizon. Contemporary society has become remarkably undisciplined in the ways that it spontaneously endorses new disciplines in almost unimaginable areas of expertise. Those involved in the art world are well accustomed to the coalescences and lightninglike dissipations of style, but a new speciality is not a common notion. In the past 25 years, traditional distinctions between sculpture, painting, drawing, photography, and installation—as well as the idea of art and architecture as independent, exclusive phenomena—have eroded, causing fused and hybrid forms and unusual intersections. And con-

Above: In 1982, students at the Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, N.J., tarred and feathered this public sculpture by artist-in-residence Paul Miller. Photo: Patricia C. Phillips. Left: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Flow City: The Glass Bridge and the Media Flow Wall*, drawing for *Flow City*, 1983-90.

WHY TEMPORARY INSTEAD PERMANENT?  
SOCIETY CHANGE, PERMANENT A MYTH IN QUICK TIME.  
TIRED AND. AFTER PAUL.

3 TYPES + MORE (?)

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ceptual catholicity, openness, and negotiable categorization have provided the groundwork for the galvanization of a new art: the now very active and hierarchically complex world of public art. Within this arena, there are many players and many productions, some enlightened ideas and little criticism.

Public art—as it is normally understood and encountered today—is a nascent, and perhaps naive, idea. It bears so little resemblance to earlier manifestations—especially the most immediate precedent of civic, elegiac art of the 19th and early 20th centuries—that the idea of a historical progression of uninterrupted continuity seems spurious; there are few instructive models. And so, though public art in the late 20th century has emerged as a full-blown discipline, it is a field without clear definitions, without a constructive theory, and without coherent objectives. When the intentions have been apparent they are usually so modest (amenity) or so obvious (embellishment or camouflage) that they seem to have little to do with art at all. In short, the making of public art has become a profession, whose practitioners are in the business of beautifying, or enlivening, or entertaining the citizens of, modern American and European cities. In effect, public art's mission has been reduced to making people feel good—about themselves and where they live. This may be an acceptable, and it certainly is an agreeable, intention, but it is a profoundly unambitious and often reactionary one. And even these small goals are infrequently satisfied; public art doesn't generally please or placate, or provide any insistent stimulation. Instead, public art today, for the most part, occupies. And just at the moment when so much apparatus has been assembled and oiled that might aid in the development of a rigorous critical foundation for public art, there is a growing feeling of—well, why bother? Indeed, an enterprise that emerged with such idealism now feels like a lost opportunity.

Yet many artists, art administrators, and bureaucrats worked hard to promote the current proliferation and professionalization of public art, and did so with the noblest of intentions. Some reflection on the past indicates that those involved had good reason to lobby for "official" policy and protections. For art that appears beyond the configurations and machinations of the gallery and museum encounters different forces and greater risks, and thus should be provided, they believed, with some fundamental assurances and safeguards—for the sake of the artist, as well as the community. And given the very real need for relief from, or challenge to, the loud monotony of the urban landscape, state and federal guidelines for "percent for art" programs were initiated; standards and criteria for selection and review drafted; and bureaucratic procedures codified. But this clarification of operations has ultimately led to a "minimum basic standard" mentality. Not unlike American housing reform in the late 19th century—which was not based on constructive legisla-

tion for a sound life, but on the absolute lowest standards of acceptability—the public art "machine" now often encourages mediocrity. To weave one's way through its labyrinthine network of proposal submissions to appropriate agencies, filings and refilings of budget estimates, presentations to juries, and negotiations with government or corporate sponsors, requires a variety of skills that are frequently antithetical to the production of a potent work of art. If the "machine" itself can be put to use as a conduit, rather than as a mold of the art that emerges, then there is still the potential for transforming methodology and materials into positive energy. But more often the result of this process has been what Gordon Matta-Clark, James Wines, and others have referred to as "the turd in the plaza."

Public art operates on a practical as well as a philosophical level, but the contemporary preoccupation has been with the pragmatic. Thus we can find abundant information on the strategies that initiate public art, but we can search far and wide for any compellingly articulated theory of public art. Can provocative art endure the democratic composition of the selection panel and process? Are art and ecumenicism in opposition? Can public art illuminate cultural ideas that other forms frequently cannot? What is it that public art can uniquely do? These are the kinds of questions, I would argue, that must be more vigorously explored. And I would further propose that this discourse will serve to overturn some knee-jerk assumptions about the very nature of the hybrid beast we call public art.

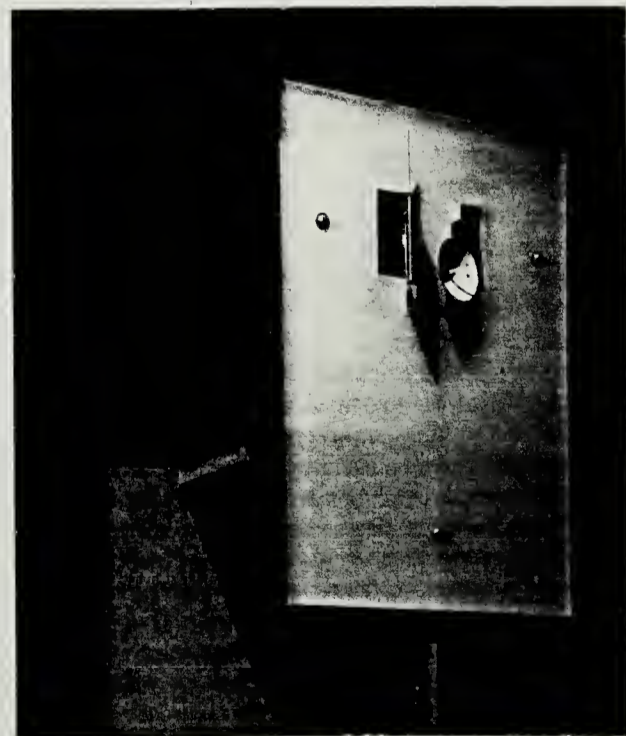
One basic assumption that has underwritten many of the contemporary manifestations of public art is the notion that this art derives its "publicness" from where it is located. But is this really a valid conception? The idea of the public is a difficult, mutable, and perhaps somewhat atrophied one, but the fact remains that the public dimension is a psychological, rather than a physical or environmental, construct. The concept of public spirit is part of every individual's psychic composition: it is that metaphysical site where personal needs and expression meet with collective aspirations and activity. The public is the sphere we share in common; wherever it occurs, it begins in the decidedly "somewhere" of individual consciousness and perception.

Therefore, the public is not only a spatial construct. And thus a truly public art will derive its "publicness" not from its location, but from the nature of its engagement with the congested, cacophonous intersections of personal interests, collective values, social issues, political events, and wider cultural patterns that mark out our civic life. Unfortunately, what we have traditionally seen is a facile definition that links those areas that cities (with private developers) designate as public spaces with the notion of public art. It is presumed that these sites, by virtue of their accessibility or prominence, are the ones where public art can and

should appear. This is a questionable idea for many reasons—not the least of which is that public space, as it is emerging in our time, bears little kinship to the public space of the town square, plaza, or common in which the public art of the past traditionally found its home. Public space, as defined today, is, in fact, the socially acceptable euphemism used to describe the area that developers have "left over," the only "negotiable" space after all of their available commercial and residential space has been rented or sold. The City of New York, for example, has granted many developers the right to upscale the height or bulk of their buildings, contingent upon their agreement to provide a little more "public space" at ground level. But what qualities and characteristics these spaces must offer have been inconsistently interpreted. Thus public space has served as a great new incentive—not to be "public," however, but to satisfy far more profit-motivated market objectives. When public space and public art seem to appear spontaneously, it is usually because some savvy or enlightened developer has discovered that beauty can be profitable, and that offering something to the community (even if no one really understands the nature of the gift) can enhance the corporate image. In the same way that "good fences make good neighbors," the clear delineation of a public space has been packaged as a neighborly gesture, with public art the fence that identifies boundaries.

But a public art that truly explores the rich symbiotic topography of civic, social, and cultural forces can take place anywhere—and for any length of time. It would not have to conform to such formal parameters, for it would not find its meaning through its situation in a forum, but

Donna Robertson and Robert McAnulty, *Room in the City*, 1987, model in plaster, Plexiglas, wood, and copper. The outer wall of the room, with satellite disk.



would *create* the forum for the poignant and potent dialogue between public ideals and private impulses, between obligation and desire, between being of a community and solitude. Wherever we might find that art, we would be inspired to extend its discourse into the variety of public and private domains we enter. Those two domains are different, of course, but they are interdependent. To define the public as merely that which exists outside the private is to deny the essential and complex relationship between the two.

A major exhibition in lower Manhattan this fall has helped to emblemize these and other disquieting questions about the relationship between so-called public space and public art. In and around a major and unfinished portion of ground-level space in the World Financial Center of the newly emerging Battery Park City complex, the real estate development firm of Olympia & York provided a space for invited artists and architects to install temporary, site-specific works. The Olympia & York assembly of art, entitled "The New Urban Landscape," was an extravaganza—in the best and worst senses of that word. This rich variety of projects announced loudly and emphatically that here lies another public space. And so here, once again, art was defined as public because of its location. Yet there was a particularly shrewd inversion at work. By dangling the bait of abundant and chewy art by some of the "hottest" accomplished and emerging artists from around the world, Olympia & York succeeded in appropriating the notion of public art to entice the public to a new site—that didn't, by any other definition, look or feel very public. And the lure for this consecration was both savory and spicy. The organizers and artists had the courage, and the developer the good sense (and beneficence), to endorse some politically loaded, controversial, and critical work in a corporate-sponsored setting. And yet "The New Urban Landscape" sends out troubling—and by now familiar—messages about public art's application. For "The New Urban Landscape" was a fin-de-siècle enterprise—in some ways, the coda for fifteen years of fervor. And when it all ended, art had served as just one more ingredient in an elaborate coronation that attempted to transform nothing more than a low-ceilinged hallway into a dynamic public space, and a private developer into a public patron.

The involvement of corporations in the sponsorship and support of art is not a new thing. After many years of stimulating the production of private art, it seems quite natural that corporations would eventually find their way to public art, which can now not only boost a corporation's reputation as intelligent and concerned, but can also serve as the vehicle to demonstrate community spirit, a belief in the idea of place in an age of placeless architecture. With this project there was a generous and open sponsor, some very good art, and thoughtful, insightful organizers. So what is the problem? What is it that disturbs?

In fact, some of the answers to these questions



Martha Schwartz, *Turf Parterre Garden*, 1988, artificial turf and removed sod. In "The New Urban Landscape." Photo: Robin Holland

will be found in other questions: those that address the implications of the temporary in public art. For in the bureaucratization of public art, there has been a tremendous emphasis on the installation of permanent projects. (Organizations such as the Public Art Fund Inc. and Creative Time, Inc.—dedicated to sponsoring short-lived exhibitions and installations in sites throughout New York—are two of the exceptions.) When evaluating proposals for art that will be commissioned to last "forever," it is not shocking that selection panels have often clammed up and chosen the safe, well-traveled path of caution. When faced with the expanses of eternity, it is not surprising that many artists themselves have tended to propose those cautious, evenhanded solutions. Therefore, the temporary is important because it represents a provocative opportunity to be maverick, or to be focused, or to be urgent about immediate issues in ways that can endure and resonate. But I would argue that the power of the temporary asserts itself productively and genuinely in situations where the pressure of the moment is implicit in the work. Seen in these terms, the temporary is not about an absence of long-term exhibition commitment on the part of any particular sponsor, but about a pledge of a different kind, with more compressed intensity, on the part of the artist.

The nucleated setting and agenda of Olympia & York's endeavor raises serious concerns about the potential for co-opting and institutionalizing even this radical fringe of public art. For what will be the lasting impact of this great event of Olympia & York's? In what significant ways has this exhibition marked this site, or furthered the idea of art as a critical public catalyst, once the gypsy encampment has packed up and moved on? In fact, wasn't this project just another schedule-driven ex-

hibition that had little to do with the present or future of the public life at this site? If a succession of temporary exhibitions might, in fact, animate this public space (something the developers apparently desire) and begin to generate some meaningful dialogue (something the rest of us might like) about space, art, and contemporary urban life, such a possibility is entirely contingent upon some long-range vision as opposed to a shrewd public relations strategy, however magnificently or munificently that strategy is enacted. By "dressing up" (or disingenuously "dressing down") what would be considered even a poorly designed indoor sculpture garden in the garb and lingo of social conscience and inquiry ("The public spaces of The World Financial Center are an ideal context for public art," a four-color brochure tells us. "The works in this exhibition make unusual demands on the viewer," etc.), Olympia & York have, as much as anything, demonstrated to us just how subject to manipulation the concept of public art has become.

Perhaps another one of the great problems of public art today stems from its fundamentally ecumenical intentions. Artists striving to meet the needs of their public audience have too easily subscribed to the notion that these needs can best be met through an art of the widest possible relevance. The ideas of ecumenism and relevance are not onerous, but they can have—and in the case of public art, often *do* have—insidious and oppressive dimensions. For broad-based appeal and the search for a universal common denominator are not a priori esthetic concepts, but a posteriori results. Reverse that order, and the art's in trouble, for art is an investigation, not an application. So it's disturbing when it looks as if artists are campaigning for public office—going for the majority consensus at all costs.

Not surprisingly, this goal of unanimity has also led to the establishment of what is considered a more democratic composition of public-art selection committees. There has been a generous and well-intentioned effort to include on these committees not only panelists with backgrounds in the arts, but also representatives from the local community in which the public installation will be situated. Yet if followed to its logical conclusion, the concept of "public" that this phenomenon implies reveals itself to be quite ludicrous. For public space is either communal—a part of the *collective* citizenry—or it is not. Somewhere along the line, our democratic process has presumed that the sentiments of one particular community, simply because of its members' propinquity to the prospective installation, should be granted greater significance. What this suggests is that we have arrived at some reliable formula for articulating the precise radius that distinguishes that community's interests from the larger field of public life. Thus the ideas of the local community and of the general public are put into an adversarial relationship, implying a fundamental conflict between

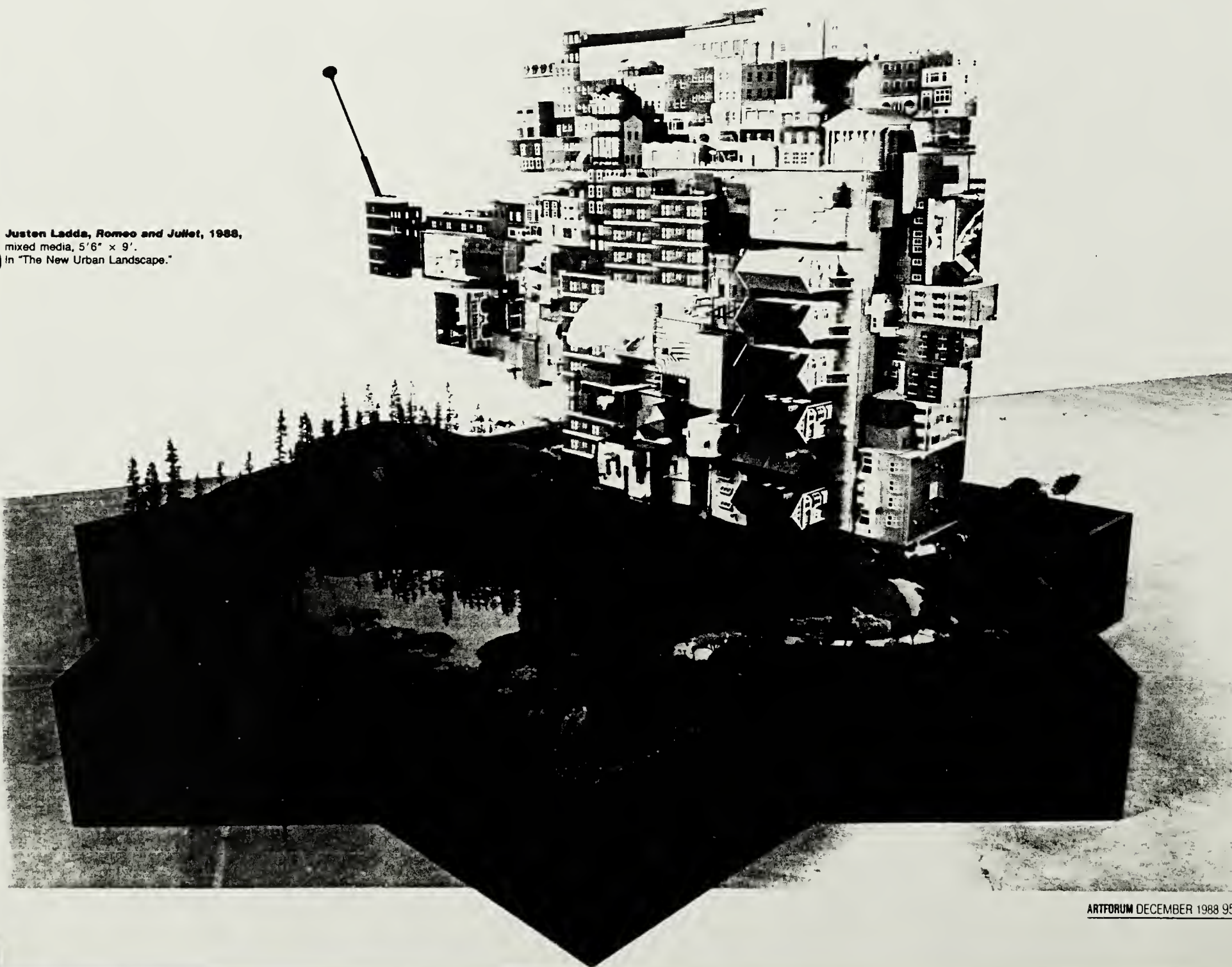
those inside a particular neighborhood, area, city, etc., and those outside. This peculiar endorsement of community opinion, sometimes at the expense of larger public concerns, subtly yet effectively affirms a notion of what I would call "psychological ownership," at the same time that it refuses to ground that notion in any terms other than geographic. Thus, because I live, work, or relax near a certain site, I believe that, in a sense, I "have" that site, and am empowered to exert control, regulation, or power over those who are the "have-nots." We have seen the ramifications of this kind of thinking in a variety of controversies. For example, which is the community that should have the most say in "approving" the design of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.? Veterans? The family members of men killed or

missing in action? The group of office workers and government bureaucrats who work nearby? The public at large, who might feel a sense of possession of this tragic, poignant space? And which is the community to be consulted when installations are contemplated for City Hall Park in Manhattan? The government employees who work in City Hall and cross the park each day? Or New York City voters for whose civic authority and commitment the site speaks? Or the many homeless who spend their days and their nights in the park? And to which group should the artist throw his or her appeal?

Rather than digging in our heels to examine and analyze the implications of these questions, too many public-art sponsors and makers seem to be trying to sidestep them with a "minimum-risk" art;

that is, an art that can be slipped quietly into space and somehow manage to engage everyone but seriously offend or disturb no one. But isn't it ironic that an enterprise aimed, even at the least, at enlivening public life is now running on gears designed to evade controversy? And that so many involved in public art express such dismay—even hurt—if and when controversy occurs? Curiously, Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, 1981, in Manhattan's Federal Plaza remains one of the great moments in contemporary public art, not despite but *because* of the conflict its installment generated. Is it offensive? Does it obstruct? Is it public if it does not please? Should the artist's personal vision of site-specificity be permitted to override the desires of the local (specifically professional) community most frequently exposed to the

Justen Ladda, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1988, mixed media, 5'6" x 9'. In "The New Urban Landscape."



work? In fact, Serra's work achieved its most profound public resonance and significance precisely at the moment when its future seemed most threatened. And that inflexible, somewhat dogmatic object in a deplorable architectural context has been enriched by the color and texture of public debate that continues to surround it. *Tilted Arc* is an important symbol for public art because of the questions it has stimulated—and not because it should not be where it is.

Unfortunately, the avoidance of such controversy has generated an attitude about public art that constrains and segregates thinking. In the 1970s, when troubled cities felt a great vulnerability to the aggressive, often destructive gestures of disenfranchised citizens, the idea of "defensible space" became an important concept. It was Oscar Newman who first proposed that public space could and should be designed in a way that protected it from the onslaughts of graffiti artists, vandals, and other assaulters.<sup>1</sup> We can see the influence of this proposition in the clunky, immovable concrete benches and barriers in our parks and city streets; the barbed grillwork appearing on ground-level heating ducts to stave off loiterers and the homeless seeking warmth. But we can also see the flip side of this proposition at work in the public-art mentality taking hold today. Public art may not be required to be physically "defensible" but it is, more and more, expected to be *defendable*. So every possible—and ludicrous—objection is raised at the early stages of the artist selection and proposal process, to anticipate and fend off any possible community disfavor. With programs dependent on such tightly woven sieves, it's not surprising that plenty of hefty, powerful projects don't make their way through. And it's not surprising that, over the years, the artists who might propose such projects have turned their energies elsewhere, while the studios of the artists who have learned the appropriate formula have become minifactories for the churning out of elegant maquettes for current and future projects.

It is important to consider that the most public and civic space of many early American cities was the common. The common represented the site, the concept, and the enactment of democratic process. This public area, used for everything from the grazing of livestock to the drilling of militia, was the forum where information was shared and public debate occurred: a charged, dynamic coalescence. The common was not a place of absolute conformity, predictability, or acquiescence, but of spirited disagreement, of conflict, of only modest compromises—and of controversy. It was the place where the ongoing dialogue between desire and civility was constantly reenacted, rather than restrained or censored. If it's true that the actual space of the common does not exist as it did two hundred years ago, the idea is still vital. Its problematic shadow image, the idea of an enormous, happy cultural melting pot, was challenged and generally dismissed twenty-five years ago—except by a lot of people involved with public art. So if

there is a tragedy here, it is that public art is in the unique position to reconstitute the idea of the common, and yet, by misconstruing the concept—by too often rewarding the timid, the proven, the assuaging—the public art machine has consistently sabotaged its own potential to do so.

Still, it seems, we're returned to the question of where that "common" might be today, or at least where—or how—we might look for the public art to create it. And though I've painted a bleak picture of the contemporary scene, it is not a hopeless one. In fact, if we take that step beyond conceiving of the new urban landscape as a geographic grid of buildings, spaces, and art, to view it instead as an ever-mutating organism sustained by multiple, interrelated vortices and networks and the private trajectories that complicate them, then the horizon line of public art expands to include the "invisible" operations of huge systems and the intimate stories of individual lives. Certainly the artists who choose to work with these polarities where the edges of the public are invented and realized are not the only ones whose projects provide significant stimulation. But their work, by pressing against calcified notions of public art, suggests some fresh visions of the common.

For example, artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles' work with the Department of Sanitation of the City of New York engages city residents in one of the most crucial, life-sustaining but maligned operations of urban life—garbage collection. Her most recent project, *Flow City* (scheduled for completion in 1990), will bring people into a cavernous marine transfer facility at 59th Street and the Hudson River for what is, in effect, a multimedia performance of trucks dumping their loads of household and commercial waste into barges destined for landfills. Ukeles' work proposes that the public in public art is defined by subject rather than object.

At the other end of the spectrum, some of the most fruitful investigations of public life and art are occurring in the most private, sequestered site of all—the home. For just as the public space has become diminished as a civic site, the home has become, in many senses, a more public, open forum. The public world comes into each home as it never has before, through television, radio, and personal computer. So that the rituals that were once shared conspicuously in a group are now still shared—but in isolation. An example of this ambiguous condition is the annual celebration of New Year's Eve in Times Square. Which is the more public event—the throng of people gathering at 42nd Street to watch a lighted apple drop, or the millions of people at home, each watching this congregation on TV? In other words, more and more, the home has become the site for the complex play of social meanings. For this reason, it is a fruitful domain for dialogue about the public/private dialectic. Following in the footsteps of Gent's Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst's 1986 exhibition "*Chambres d'amis*," the Santa Barbara

(California) Contemporary Arts Forum organized their 1988 "Home Show," with ten California residents welcoming ten artists into their homes to explore the region of interiority—as it relates to the external, public world.

For this project, the collaborative team of Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, with a work entitled *Picture out of Doors*, methodically removed all the doors in Pat and David Farmer's home, including doors from closets, cupboards, and cabinets, even from bedrooms and bathrooms. The tangible evidence of sanctioned voyeurism was stacked in the living room. In a sense, the team's project publicized intimacy by denying privacy. In many ways, the Santa Barbara installation was a tame project for Ericson and Ziegler. For the past ten years they have conducted their own investigations of the private/public dialectic, with much of their work occurring on their own instigation, that is, without the benefit or legitimacy of an arts organization. They have placed advertisements in local newspapers seeking homeowners willing to collaborate on projects. In one project in Hawley, Pennsylvania, for example, called *Half Slave, Half Free*, 1987, the team asked a homeowner to continue to cut only half of his lawn and leave the other portion unmaintained. *Half Slave, Half Free* suggests an expanded and provocative definition of public art, one that has sustained a commitment to independent "guerrilla" activity as an alternative to institutionalized commissioning, and that appeals to and enlists the support of the single vote (the homeowner/collaborator) as opposed to the majority rule in order to explore the half-slave, half-free relationship of personal to public, and vice versa.

Individual vision and independent thinking are possible in the realm of public art; what we've come to expect—or accept with a sigh—is not all we need expect. Two years ago, architects Donna Robertson and Robert McNulty proposed a design of an apartment for an exhibition called "Room in the City." The proposal was spare yet complex. Within the space of a small Manhattan apartment, a procession of five video monitors, hooked up to a satellite communications disk placed outside the window, showed random images of the city, creating an ethereal glow of violated or collaged information. On the other side of a diagonal wall that slashed through the space, a single monitor, unattached to the communications dish and the surrounding city, sat at the foot of the bed. In the traditional site of domesticity and intimacy, this project stands as a metaphor for our new urban landscape; that site where private and public, the intimate and the shared, are fragmented and reconceptualized, where culture both originates and ends, and where the public is permitted to assert itself as an idea of ever-shifting focus and fruitful frustration. □

Patricia C. Phillips writes regularly for *Artforum*.

1. See Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1972.



Installation view in the home of Pat and David Farmer, Santa Barbara, Jr. "Home Show." Photo: Wayne McC

Temporary & public Art  
Patricia Phillips

295-A

Contradiction in Art - expression of "permanence through its perpetualness . . . [and] Art that is contemporary & timely." Temporary Art as anti-historical, and even anti-rational, Art, as well as being Anti-object orientated - Against Art as a commodity - permanency of Art as the commercial value - like gold & precious. Temporary Art is issue orientated & begins to devalue the sale & purchasability - How can temporary Art financially survive - A documentation or memorial of such temporary works, or that it has greater social value, whether it be educational or political - perhaps more democratic than Aristocratic - which asks the question of the history Art appreciation/patronage, & if this has changed at all in the 20th Century, or not, only to be replaced by the state, corporations & general commerce

295-B

New Technology, many visual, more ephemeral than before, has undoubtedly influenced Art - printmaking, DWT, sculpture being the historical - Video, film, cinema, electronic etc. While Hollywood & Television works has saturated these new technologies, to make these technologies into industries, employing many who may have been become pure artists into their production, better opportunities etc, or relegating those that were more inclined to work in art context or community as fringe & ill equipped & appreciated. The emergence & gratification of high-tech audio-visual Artistry has been hampered by the industrialization of these mediums, creating immense time lapse to artist such as Warhol/Pop/JAM is other. They doubly, they have been forbidden to the large public context, which the industry co-opted, leaving

then to work in specialized public spaces (Wodiczko),  
~~who could not~~ whose work could have been extended to  
media located public spaces, not just play the physical  
& built environment public spaces. Media space-controlled  
by private industries - was made into private space, which  
retains the a very intrinsic quality of being public - I/Internet  
is the contemporary version of the struggle between the  
industries & citizens in who controls it & who is at the  
producing & receiving ends.

THIS illustrates ~~the~~ the trouble with public art & its  
inability to embrace & be embraced by the public ~~as~~  
it is denied of both right public orientated media &  
context. The majority of public art remains in the form  
of its more traditional, <sup>analogic</sup> ~~analogic~~ & private mediums, such  
as painting, drawing & most often sculptures. Even though  
these mediums or thoughts be brought out into public  
space, that is in open space outside <sup>the</sup> physically & culturally  
enclosed environment of gallery & museum, they suffer  
much true engaging, or shall we say "interactivity"  
that more ~~ephemeral~~ <sup>ephemeral</sup> aspect of new technologies  
& media that has become the contemporary public space.  
Putting art in front of City Hall, Convention Center,  
public parks etc is not just the ~~same~~ same as  
putting them into people's living room through too  
channel capacity Satellite Digital Cable Television  
System. There may no longer be walls or buildings  
of substantial civic monuments, or Admission fees,  
but much of today's so-call Art in public place ~~remains~~  
~~retains~~ ~~walls~~ between private & public spaces, ~~the~~ walls  
really broke down  
the barrier  
are just made  
invisible.

Furthermore, we all know how modern technology HAVE  
CHANGED our environment so quickly - telephone, electricity,  
car etc. Computers but no one seems to realize that  
time itself is moving faster. - Temporary art is about  
reflection of speeding time, as contrast to permanent art.  
I'm not saying that there is clear distinction between  
what is temporary & permanent, but to say that changing  
is the most permanent theme about contemporary culture.



296A

"the private is human condition, but the public is invented!"  
Can public be defined? Without the ability to define public,  
can art ~~not~~ be called public? & if public is invented  
then when was it invented? Was it the invention of to  
describe the general population during the process of  
political change from aristocracy to govt of representation  
or beginning of the state? If there was an evolution  
in political system that gave then the right to call the  
general public population the public, then did not  
make an equally distinguishable evolution itself to  
call ~~for~~ the general population the public. I think  
not.

297A - 298

Site-specific vs. issue specific

An aspect of public art that has been undeniably successful  
is <sup>its</sup> site-specific aspect, which I would call it more  
as site-broadening. It has been more successful ~~in~~  
in enlarging the place for and of art by getting it,  
and artists, out of its traditionally enclosed environment,  
thus undoubtedly influencing the nature & shape of art.

~~But~~ The specificity of the site has also created  
a condition for art to become more sensitive to the issues  
that reside in those specific contexts. The influence of  
being, working & placing art in different, or more  
various of contexts, has for the most beneficial  
consequences of public art, & perhaps has influenced  
art to be more issue-specific, than more than  
its generic & the generic space of museums &  
galleries, which is an environment solely dedicated  
to presentation & viewing or studios, which are  
personal space to create & express —

it is the condition of interactivity with the context,  
its community & the aesthetic of both cultural &  
physical landscapes, which has helped Art to  
see itself as more ephemeral & temporary than  
~~per~~ formalistic & permanent. The condition to see  
itself against more the more brutal & common  
state of culture hopefully would help to make Art  
to evolve from its high state to a daily existence.

### 30/A "Unregulated Encounter of the Art"

WHAT IF Art existed & be presented in places, context &  
in time where they are not normally expected or seen.  
this raises the question that Art is seen ~~only~~ mostly when  
it is expected to be seen. - i.e. museum/galleries, space  
for public Art. public Art has made a great leap  
of placing Art in places that were before were never  
used for Art - ~~urban~~ bill boards, bus stops,  
train stops, inside bus & train etc. But what if  
this went further, & Art appeared in television  
program, radio program, in magazine, on the highway  
signs etc. - appearing places where people would not  
expect, & therefore become more integral & less segregated  
land of activities between the social classes of  
more "educated" & "cultured" class with the rest.  
what if, like 1% program for public Art,  
~~the~~ if Art gets 1% of Airtime, television time etc.  
expected & unexpected means Art is  
segregated.

# Out of Order: the public Art Machine

Patricia Phillips

93A. professionalization of public Art & its rather ~~present~~ state of embellishment or mere occupation of modest public space, far short of its ideal & noblest intention during its conception. — is public Art, merely a reactionary offshoot on the limitation of autocratic & commercialized state of Art in Modern & Capitalistic context or is it & can it be Art of its own legitimacy. Or at least be the radical <sup>with</sup> investigator for the future evolution Art to become more public & therefore democratic?

## 93B Bureaucratization of public Art.

Bureaux & official policy  
"minimum basic standards" mentality  
encourage mediocrity.

Was the origin of public Art, or intention of it, was to be relegated to exclusivity of Art, not to professionalize Art. — like Architecture? Was Brownworth, outdoors work the originator of public Art. (Smithson, work - Clark etc?)

93C "public dimension is a psychological, rather than a physical or environmentally construct."

June 16, 1987

Mr. Kyong Park  
Storefront for Art & Architecture  
97 Kenmare Street  
New York, New York 10012

Dear Kyong:

I have enclosed two proposals for exhibitions that I would be interested in organizing with Storefront. I am curious and enthusiastic about both, and I therefore seek your advice and thoughts about which one might best fit in with Storefront's plans for the upcoming year. (I also know that you might not be interested in either proposal! Please be honest.) I will continue to develop these ideas in more detail, but I wanted to get something to you for you to ponder.

I also wanted you to know that Parsons has hired Constantin Boym to teach a course in the fall called the "New New York Subway." He has some good ideas and some interesting work might be generated by the students. Perhaps we could talk sometime about whether Storefront would ever like to show student work, or perhaps do short, limited-run exhibitions of special projects. I believe that Constantin has discussed his plans with you; perhaps the three of us should talk about this at some point.

As promised, I hope to become more involved in Storefront again this year. Don't hesitate to let me know how I can help you and Shirin. I will continue to be involved at Parsons three days a week, but I have resigned as Associate Chair, and this should leave me less encumbered.

Let me know when you would like to discuss the proposals or any thoughts for next year. I will be around most of the summer with the exception of the last two weeks in July and the week of August 24 (when I will be in Seattle thanks to Glenn's kind invitation.)

Best wishes,

*Patti*

## THE SITE OF SOURCES

The different ideological positions of Modern and post-Modern architecture have been thoroughly identified and documented, but they share one similarity of considerable consequence. Most Modern and post-Modern architecture is influenced primarily by architecture; whether the inspiration is formal, spatial, or historical, the sources are inevitably architectural. This exhibition proposes alternative visions of invention by representing the work of artists/architects who look beyond, or often away from, architecture as the seminal reference, to ideas gleaned from other fields of thought, disciplines, and cultural phenomena.

The notion of sources has become enormously important and frequently volatile. For architects who continue to look only to architecture, the sources lead to a process of verification and purification. While this exhibition does not condemn this conventional, more circumscribed position, it chooses, instead, to examine creative work that has been generated or guided by cultural, social, political, or technological ideas to fortify and, occasionally, challenge the production of architecture in the late 20th century. At the same time, this exhibition has its own rigorous standards and seeks to present the work of individuals and groups with the most focused and deliberate visions; looking to extra-architectural sources and ideas can too often become a random rummaging about. This exhibition looks to alternatives to architectural hegemony that offer new directions for consideration and clear objectives.

### Suggested participants:

Diller/Scofidio, Robertson/McAnulty, Alfredo Jaar, Andrew MacNair, Allan Wexler, Hawkinson/Smith-Miller, SITE, and others.

NOTE: I would hope to do a small catalogue featuring excerpts from a round-table discussion with the participants and an essay by me.

## TEMPORARY PUBLIC ART: CHANGE AND INTERVENTION

In the past fifteen years, federal, state, and private organizations have set up elaborate mechanisms for the production and placement of public art in open spaces and buildings. This professionalization of public art has created both stability and permanency -- a protection that is very much justified and certainly desired by many artists and communities. But this mandate for public art is a mixed blessing often leading to conservative results that are inoffensive, non-controversial, and unimpassioned.

This exhibition proposes to examine public art that is intentionally short-lived -- where longevity and permanency are not desired objectives. In fact, given the temporary nature of these kind of public art installations, the work is typically high on impact, often volatile, and risk-taking. Possibilities are enhanced by the understanding that the work will not endure.

Temporary public art is an important phenomenon which continues a precedent of involvement, instigation, and ideation as primary objectives. It is a form of civic rhetoric and response; it demands reaction and participation. Suspended between object and event, installation and performance, it is a model for public art that takes chances.

### Suggested participants:

Dennis Adams, Alfredo Jaar, Mierle Ukeles, Jenny Holzer, Kate Ericson/Mel Ziegler, Les Levine, and others.

NOTE: I hope to do a small catalogue featuring separate interviews with Alfredo Jaar and Mierle Ukeles, as well as a short essay by me.

March 26, 1987

Dear Kyong:

I am sorry that it has taken me so long to get back with you about this evening seminar/discussion that we have been talking about. The more I tried to pin down a specific topic or a clear question the more illusive my ideas became. But here are some possible topics:

"WHAT DOES CRITICISM HAVE TO DO WITH THE FUTURE?"

or

"WHAT DOES CRITICISM HAVE TO DO WITH ARCHITECTURE?"

or

\* "CAN CRITICISM REALIZE ITS DISRUPTIVE POTENTIAL?"

I think that we had talked about having a question serve as the title for the evening event.

Some possible dates that are good for me include:

Tuesday - April 28 or May 5

Thursday - April 30

If none of these are good for you we can discuss other possibilities.

*Patti Phillips*

\* This is my favorite. I can elaborate.

## PUBLIC ART ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSIONS

During the fall <sup>winter,</sup> and spring, Stonefunt for art and Architecture will sponsor a series of round-table discussions on public art issues and ideas. This open, participatory format will provide an informal, yet focused, opportunity for artists, architects, arts administrators, and writers to examine the future of public art.

The eight roundtable discussions, scheduled from November through April, will address specific topics or themes and <sup>will</sup> be moderated by individuals who have been actively involved in public art.

Moderators and topics will include:

- Jennifer MacGregor Cutting, arts administrator  
Wendy Feuer, arts administrator  
on "State Patronage of Public Art: Means and Ends"
- Patricia C Phillips, critic  
on "Disruptive Potentials: Criticism and Public Art"
- Stephen Korne, artist  
on "Waterfronts and Urban Access to the Earth"
- Richard Haas, artist  
on "Monuments: How to Deal with Values in an  
Age of Cultural Relativism"
- Hera, artist  
on "Spirituality in Contemporary Public Art"
- Kate Ericson, artist  
Mel Zeigler, artist  
on "Extracting from What Exists"
- Dennis Adams, artist  
on "Disguise and Subversion in Public Art"
- Alfredo Jaar  
on "Public Art as Political Art"

For further information, please

call or write:

Kyng Park, Dm —

St —

97 —

NY

tel 212 —